



Africa

**A Weighty Problem
for our Holy Father—
See Picture Story page 18**

WHITE SISTERS

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER
1954



At the Novitiate on the Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady three novices made their religious Professions and four postulants received the Holy Habit. In the absence of His Excellency, Bishop Zuroweste, Msgr. Bauer officiated at the ceremony.

The postulants were escorted to the chapel in bridal attire. After Mass, they received the habit, which Msgr. Bauer had blessed, and the procession left the chapel while the choir chanted the psalm *In Exitu*. On returning to the chapel dressed in their religious garb, the new novices went up to the altar to receive the white veil and their name in religion.

Helen Harrison of Baltimore, Md., became Sr. Christopher

Mary; Kathleen Anderson of St. Paul, Minn., became Sr. Mary Jeannine; Maureen Pasternak of Buffalo, N. Y., became Sr. Mary Angelica, and Betty Roselle of Crystal Lake, Ill., became Sr. Mary Michael.

With their crown of roses they knelt in front of the chapel while Sr. Loretta Mary, the former Frances Challenor of White Plains, N. Y.; Sr. David Mary, the former Susan Warner of Manchester, N. H., and Sr. Mary Demetria, the former Catherine Smith of Indianapolis, Ind., pronounced their first vows of Obedience, Poverty, and Chastity for a year. Then the newly professed Sisters received the silver ring, crucifix and rosary, insignia of their religious profession.



POSTULATE
Mary Glenn, R-D 2
Franklin, Pa.

HEADQUARTERS
319 Middlesex Ave.,
Metuchen, N. J.

NOVIATIE
3810 N. Illinois St.
Belleville, Ill.

AFRICA, Volume XI, Number 5, is edited and published bi-monthly with ecclesiastical approbation by the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa (White Sisters). Office of Publication: White Sisters, 319 Middlesex Ave., Metuchen, New Jersey, Annual subscription \$1.00. Entered as second class matter December 15, 1931, at the Post Office of Metuchen, New Jersey, under the act of March 3, 1879.

GLEANINGS

from the

GREAT PERIODS OF HISTORY

Tunisia may rightly be termed "the only country of its kind in the whole world" because it is privileged beyond all others in both its place on the confines of East and West and in the fame of its glorious past.

Many civilizations are apparent in the characteristics of Tunisia, each one leaving its deep imprints upon the primitive dwellers who were the "Berbers" or "Numids".

The first to come and stay were the Tyrians, who in the wake of beautiful Elissa called Dido ("the runaway") hastened to build a city around the rock of Byrsa. By means of subterfuge the astute queen had come into possession of the rock of Byrsa. The new inhabitants hastened to build around and upon it the strong and powerful city of Carthage with its wealth of pottery, bronze and silver vases. Here the people enjoyed pleasures of all kinds, living in homes fragrant with incense and the heavily scented herbs from Asia. Wonderful draperies and soft carpets bright with the glow of precious stones were among the furnishings to be found in these apartments.

Then the tragedy occurred which was transmitted to us by the poet Virgil: the love-and-death affair which brought about the war between Rome and Carthage. We are familiar with the



grand counter attack on the part of the Tunic people when their wives, daughters and mothers cut and platted the beautiful hair of their proud heads to be used as cordage for the warships. Then Ameliar and Annibal leagued together against Scipio . . . and the final crash . . . the crumbling . . . Here the reign of Rome begins.

Immediately marble dwellings were erected and there arose a forest of columns in the form of carved marble and mosaics, Roman temples, along with taverns, baths, cisterns, and aqueducts. Neither hard work nor expense were spared when organizing a new standard of living, according to the grandest and most artistic plan. And then, alongside of the



The Basilica of St. Louis at Carthage

pagan temples, basilicas were erected. At first they were plain and small but soon they grew to immense proportions in order to accommodate the increasing number of Christian people. The Roman Empire became uneasy about the progress shown by these Christians, so suddenly persecution was begun.

There and then the era of persecution was started with those twelve martyr peasants from Scillium (the first to bear the palm); on and on it spread as we know so well from the Acts of the Martyrdom of St. Felicitas and St. Perpetua who were thrown into the Circus Ring to be devoured by the hungry wild beasts in that very amphitheater which is today revered and held as an immense reliquary in the city of Carthage.

From the blood of martyrs gen-

erations of Christians were born and that period was the magnificent age of men such as Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, the age of numerous and flourishing bishoprics and of fervent Christian life.

The Vandals invaded Carthage and Genseric became its ruler. The wealthy city was ransacked and pillaged. Carthage, which was formerly so graceful, facing the great blue sea, with its streets shaded by groves of palm trees, and its surrounding baths, theaters, basilicas, etc., now became another Babel with its harsh Tuedesque rulers . . . and worse still: new creeds, new worships, pagan, orthodox, Arian, Donatist, disturbed and shook the faith of the African Christians.

The Byzantine Empire and its Belisaire did try but in vain to re-

store peace. No ground nor place was safe enough. This circumstance was favorable to the hordes of Mohammed's Seyids. So they in turn struck in the year 698 by invading Tunisia. Orders were given to destroy and ruin everything. Henceforth the pillars of Christian basilicas were used to build mosques. Christianity had sunk under that flood of disasters

Not altogether, however! No, indeed, because King Louis IX who took the cross on the feast of the Annunciation had decided to carry it right into the "land of the Crescent" and he undertook the Pilgrimage of the Cross with the secret hope of baptizing El Mostanger. He wrote on that occasion: . . . "Tell your lord the king of Tunis that I should choose to be for the remainder of my life, into the Saracens' stronghold, deprived even of light, on this condition, that your king and your people receive baptism with a sincere heart" But he was stricken down by the plague. His chronicler relates the story thus:

"He orders ashes to be spread as a couch on the bare ground, and his men are asked to lay him upon the humble bed of rest; he joins his hands on his chest and with his gaze heavenwards he gives up his soul to our Creator, at the very hour at which the Son of God died on the Cross for the salvation of the world."

From the symbolic bed of ashes on which Louis de France died because of the exceeding ardor of his charity the fire is still smouldering and it is not to be quenched on the Plateau of Byrsa, the altar whence martyrs' souls took flight to heaven. God was to choose a great hero to rekindle the flame.

The day and the hour arrived and Cardinal Lavigerie stood upon the scene, as Founder of the White Fathers and the White Sisters, calling Carthage back to life. And now, over the whole of Africa which he loved intensely his motto "CARITAS" radiates a warmth and a light, while rays of hope are reaching to the remotest limits of the Dark Continent.

Sr. M. John Chrysostom, W.S.

The Amphitheatre where St. Felicitas and St. Perpetua were martyred.



EVOLUTION IN TUNISIA

A short time ago I was talking with a group of Tunisian friends, all well educated people, and was pleased to hear one of them say: "In this world nothing must remain motionless; everything must progress." That Tunisian scholar was not aware that he was putting into words one of the laws that our Creator laid down most profoundly in Nature.

What, then, is evolution other than the succession of the improving phases of a being—or a group of beings—in quest of its complete development?

How Do the Tunisians Understand the Evolution?

The easiest way to answer is to quote some of their sayings or relate facts which throw a light on that subject. One man said: "When I was young, my father had me study at the Mosque. He would not hear of anything else, for he was very prejudiced in favor of our ancestral customs. When he died, I gave up all that and went into business. Though I was too old to start learning French, I managed to go to France several times for my firm. I worked hard and am now a rich man. I have a little daughter whom I love dearly. I do not

know yet with what intelligence God has endowed her. If she is not very clever, I shall give her an elementary education and teach her to keep house well. If she is intelligent, I want her to get a degree in the sciences, to know other languages and to devote herself to sports."

While the proud father was speaking, he unfolded a newspaper in Arabic which showed a cartoon, depicting a Moslem woman wearing a man's toque and taking a walk in the street, while at home her husband was preparing the meal. Scandal for the traditionists, topic for lively discussion among the conservatives and partisans of Evolution.

Which of the Two Will Triumph?

A rich business man, belonging to a respectable family known for its sound and strong notions of traditions, did not send his daughter to school. When she was twelve years old he begged to have her educated no matter what the cost. He said, "Please, Sister, do all you can for her. I see very well the way things are going; a girl without an education will not be able to find a suitable husband. I do not want my child to marry a good-for-nothing."

It is not at all unusual to hear sensible parents talking thus; it is even frequent. This brings home to us the striking note of common opinion. Anyone who wishes to hear and understand needs no commentaries. The terms and the facts are symptomatic.

What About Woman's Reaction?

When facing the problem of Evolution, she reacts with the fullness of her woman's nature, which excites the new feeling of a liberty too long repressed and that ardent inclination peculiar to the Oriental mind.

Here again I illustrate with facts: A young girl from a well known family, very well brought up, who, because she had passed through this phase of progress, believed there were no longer any limits to her freedom, no longer any reason to be prudent, and that it was no longer necessary to heed the advice of her parents. One day she secretly left the parental roof and contracted a marriage with one whom she had selected herself, in defiance of all the unalterable tradition of the past. Alas, she paid dearly for her rashness but it was too late.

Another fact of a different category. Not so long ago, Cheikh el Islam was deposed. It was not, as was feared, the man who reorted, but a delegation of young men and girls. Carrying the Tunisian flag, they went to protest to the newly elected one, calling upon him not to accept this post.

Yes, indeed, Tunisian women who, up to now, were held inside and concealed behind the mysterious walls of ancient houses, now take their stand in the vanguard of Evolution. They go to schools and colleges that give predominance to the teaching of literary Arabic. They are entering the field of politics with their brothers and vie with them in patriotism.

It is an undeniable fact that Tunisia is at a serious turning point of its history. Traditionalism, which remained permanent for so many centuries, is crumbling down. The rigid regulations

Tunisian girls of to-day



which, for ages past, shackled and manacled the souls and minds of the women, are loosening their grip. Following the law of nature, these liberated minds are changing. They are straining toward their welfare, or at least what they believe to be their welfare.

Here is the poignant aspect of the turn of events: How many doubts, struggles, hardships and tragedies among those on whom God has bestowed intelligence and a firm will-power! "Where is the real good? Which are the things truly worth living for? What are we heading for?" These are the questions we hear them sigh forth. Some confide, "You don't know what we are suffering, we who have progressed."

Yes, they are suffering, and make no mistake—the opposing currents shaking Europe at the present time, the one lifting humanity to lofty summits, the other dragging them to the abyss, have their repercussions here. They are different, undoubtedly, but are felt all the more because they are acting on the already troubled souls, on minds already out of tune with their social sphere, with themselves, and with this irresistible force called atavism. Few of the Western world suspect its depth among Orientals.

We have come here as Missionaries. As such, what part are we to take in this fluctuation of ideas, impulses, reactions, into which the future of Tunisia is thrown? For remember, we have come among them as brethren, and entered the

home of this nation, not to be served, but to serve. Since, by vocation, we have the advantage of being firmly established on the immutable Rock which remains unshaken by the assaults of this world, our first role is to soar above strife, parties, races and nations, as unselfish messengers of peace, union and brotherhood.

It is a great thing for those who suffer to be able to find a friendly home, where they are understood, enlightened, and consoled. The knocks, the hatreds, the strife have their origin most often in misunderstandings which reach the extreme, when it is a question of temperaments as those of the East and West.

Our part is to act as agents of adaptation and natural sympathy. It is towards this end that courses are given in literary Arabic and in sociology. Meetings are held to discuss adaptation. Christian girls have their own "at home" days. It is for this purpose that nurses and social welfare workers are trained to place themselves at the service of the Tunisian community.

But the initiation of a people cannot be the work of a few devoted specialists. It calls for the sincere and complete collaboration of all. May all those who read these lines beg the *Master of the World* to enlighten the minds and unite the hearts; so that Tunisian Evolution, continuing in its ascending course, may be realized in full beauty.

—SR. ALIX MARIE, W.S.

"Would you like to go with us to Bwanda to see the African Sisters' Profession Ceremony?" our Mother Visitor asks without preliminary. Like to go? . . . we certainly would!

The next day we left for Bwanda, where the "Bannabikira"—Daughters of Mary—have their Motherhouse. The route is familiar to us: this is Uganda, with its hills sometimes bare of vegetation, sometimes covered with trees and shrubs; with its banana groves in which nestle a few huts; its fields of corn, manioc or cotton; its termite hillocks; its vast stretches of graceful papyrus trees; its little forests where towering palms sway their long branches, and near Masaka, the flat plain dotted with bushes.

The sun has disappeared behind the horizon when we reach Bwanda, a large building of monastic appearance, now alive with Religious intent on preparing for the great day. We receive here the same sisterly welcome as in all our houses. In the large Chapel many African Sisters, participants in tomorrow's ceremony, are praying.

The following morning all gather in the chapel for the first Mass. The ceremony starts at 7:30. Already, the Baganda men and women are arriving, all dressed up in their Sunday attire, trying to find places in the church,

for many late comers will have to stay outside.

The procession, headed by the novices, advances slowly under the arches of the cloister to the singing of *Jesus Corona Virginum*. Beside me, an elegantly dressed young man points and smiles at one of them, perhaps his little sister, whose day of joy he is so happy to share. Then come the postulants, who will receive the white veil of the novices, and finally the professed Sisters, who will take their perpetual vows.

His Excellency, Bishop Kiwanuka, a native of Uganda, approaches the altar assisted by a White Father and two African Brothers and Mass begins. A dozen or more Baganda priests are present in the Sanctuary. Hymns are sung alternately in Latin and Ruganda by the BANNABIKIRA, while the devout faithful form a long line to go to Communion in the wake of the participants in the ceremony.

Mass ended, His Excellency, miter on head and crozier in hand, addresses the young girls kneeling before him. These devout Religious, his pride, are of the same race as he. "You are the flower of the Church," he says. "You are the salt of the Baganda earth. You know, my children, that a car, even if it be new and the latest model, will not run without gasoline The gasoline in your life is prayer. You are called to God's service, to win souls for Christ; if you are prayerful, all will be well. Pray and be a model and the pride of all who will come in contact with you. You are the



The Novices lead the procession.

joy of your own relatives and friends who have come from far and near this morning to share your happiness . . . ”

In the corner where we sit, many young girls, neatly attired in their school uniforms, listen attentively . . . the smallest opening wide their big black eyes. Are the seeds of vocation to the *Bannabikira* being sown? But one of them has fallen asleep on the knees of her neighbor, like the young man of Troas during the all night sermon of St. Paul!

The 14 postulants kneel at the Communion rail. They have donned the religious habit—blue dress and cape—and will now receive the white veil from the hands of their Bishop. “My daughters, what do you ask?” The liturgical answer follows. His Excellency gives to each the white veil which

he has just blessed. Then he says to each new novice: “You will forget the name you have borne up to now. Henceforth you will be called Sister . . . ” And the novice answers, “Webale” (Thank you).

All file out, beaming under their white veils, while the 18 novices who have finished their probation come forward to pronounce their first vows. “What do you ask?” “The grace to make profession”. Kneeling before Bishop Kiwanuka, right hand on the Gospels, each one reads the formula of vows she takes for a year and returns the paper to His Excellency, who gives her the blue veil of the temporary vows.

Now it is the turn of the Professed Sisters who will take perpetual vows. There are 22 of them. They know the meaning



The Novices take their Vows.

of "obedience", the value of bending their own will to others' wishes. They are aware of the amount of abnegation, of self-effacement and abandonment needed to center one's life on the Divine Will. They are about to take a serious step in the religious life, but they are well prepared. For the past four months they have been separated from their companions and have received appropriate lessons and conferences. After much prayer and deep consideration they realize that there is no happiness equal to the total gift of oneself to God in spite of the sacrifice it entails.

One by one the Sisters kneel before their Bishop and slowly repeat the formula: "Before Your Excellency, before our Mother General, before all those here present, I vow and promise to God on

the Holy Gospels poverty, chastity, and obedience until death, according to the Constitutions of the Congregation." His Excellency presents to each Sister the black veil, the rosary and silver ring, the emblems of perpetual profession. During the singing of the TE DEUM, they all prostrate, while the crowd spontaneously rises in order to see them better. "Blessed are they who are called to the wedding feast of the Lamb!"

I gaze with emotion at my African Sisters, called by God to the religious life, and I understand what an accumulation of sacrifices their answer to the Divine Call represents.

This ceremony, so simple yet so moving, reminds me of the ceremony which took place three weeks before at Masindi in Bun-



After the ceremony our Sisters congratulate their African Sisters who took their perpetual vows.

nyoro, where His Excellency, Bishop Lacoursiere ordained a young Munyoro priest, a native of Masindi, before the eyes of his family and a host of friends. After 16 years of study, this young levite was being raised to the dignity of priesthood, and his joy, like that of his people, was profound, sincere and unmistakable.

Remembering this, it seems to me this morning that I have seen the Africa of my dreams: the Prelate consecrated in 1939 by His Holiness Pius XII; the priest whose fingers are still wet with the Chrism; the African Brothers who are so devoted and useful; and these Sisters who work among the women of their own race, so justly appreciated. Yes, all of Africa is there before my eyes! The old catechists who greet us with a low bow . . . The venerable

ancients whom the young people kiss on the shoulder and call "Baba" . . . The poor old women like the one we saw this morning, lame and half blind, hobbling to the church with the help of a strong stick to participate in the happiness of her religious daughter . . . The young mothers draped in multi-colored cloth, proudly carrying their little ones. They are very good, these babies! There is hardly an untoward sound to disturb the long ceremony . . . And I tell myself that the little one sniffling in the arms of his pretty young mother may some day be a levite, or even a prelate of His Holiness.

The congregation of the BANNAPIKIRA, which is still less than five decades old, yesterday had 423 professed Sisters. Today it has 441, not counting the 14 young

novices, nor the many postulants and aspirants. The Church is on the march in this beautiful country of the Baganda. The harvest is ripening under the African sun where, less than 75 years ago, there flamed the pyre of the young Baganda martyrs burned alive because they wished to preserve the faith of their Baptism and their innocence.

Yes, the harvest is ready: it is magnificent! And the other White Sisters present this morning at the ceremony thought, as I do, that our task with the BANNABIKIRA, contrary to what one might think, is far from finished. Of course, they are now autonomous, and all their activities are governed by their Superior General and her four Counselors. Their Congregation each year undertakes new activities. But these African Sisters, who are destined to guide the women of their race in their evolution, must be given a complete intellectual formation and must possess the necessary diplomas for the care of the sick and for teaching at all levels. The

Normal School graduates are not numerous enough for this work. Many of the Religious are still pursuing their studies. They must be able later to take charge of high schools and to teach in the Normal School.

The goal of our missionary apostolate is to establish healthy self-governing Christian communities with all the necessary adjuncts before leaving the region. "The conversion of the Africans will be done by the African", our founder, Cardinal Lavigerie, predicted. His wish is each day coming nearer to fulfillment.

As we leave the flourishing Motherhouse of Bwanda, I bless the Lord Who gave me the happiness of witnessing this moving ceremony. I think of the other sections of Africa where the light of the Gospel has not yet penetrated, and I pray that He may send a multitude of workers from Europe, from America, from Africa to bring His light into all the dark huts that nestle in the groves and forests of Africa.

SR. M. BENEDICTA, W.S.

One Rosary For Two

One of the little girls in the Catechism class of an African Mission very much wanted a Rosary of her own. She implored her teacher for several days to give her one. "How can I pray properly to Our Lady on my fingers?" she cried.

Not receiving immediately a satisfactory answer to her plea, the child had an ingenious idea which would do away with the need for counting on her fingers.

The following Sunday, whilst the Rosary was being said, the little girl leaned forward and whispered in the ear of the child in front of her: "Put your Rosary over your shoulder, so that you can use it from the front and I can use it from behind."

No sooner said than done. The accommodating friend swung her Rosary over her left shoulder so that the decades hung down within reach of the other child and greatly to her contentment.

The Blessing of Our New School

Sister Mary John, who teaches at our Thika Mission, in Kenya, sent us the following which was written by one of her pupils, a girl 14 years old. No corrections have been made.



Preparations for the great day began on a Wednesday. Throughout the whole building was the happy bustle of a spring-cleaning day. Merry laughter echoed in every room. Spring-cleaning had begun. "Hurrah" and "Good-bye to Study" was the usual song. There was a great deal to be done and we set to work with all the energy we could give. Floors needed scrubbing! Windows for cleaning! Everyone was as busy as a bee. But by Saturday evening every little nook and cranny was spotlessly clean. The Stage, where Mass was to be said was beautifully arranged. Everything was ready for the great day.

At last ! Sunday morning dawned. A morning of blue skies and bright sunshine with an occasional cloud or two adorning the bright blue sky. Excitement was in the air, and quite rightly too, for this was no ordinary day. The whole building was to be blessed by the Archbishop and after that Mass would be said by him.

At about 8:15 the Archbishop arrived. Everything was made ready for the ceremony. We stood in single files ready for the procession from the chapel to the

school. Singing all the time we approached the building, where the blessing of every room with holy water and incense took place. After that Mass was said by the Archbishop while the choir sang. His Grace then preached a wonderful sermon telling us of how Mother Majella, our Superior, had built this boarding block out of Faith, Hope, and Charity. The sermon was repeated thrice: first in English, then in Swahili, at the same time translated into Kikuyu by * Father Lamer, the parish priest.

By the time Mass was over, many of our parents, who had been invited for the occasion, had arrived and after greeting them, some of us began helping the Sisters to remove the altar and prepare the place for the concert. At two o'clock sharp the concert began and lasted for an hour. The stage-room was crowded. His Grace with about twelve priests were present with Mother Majella and some other Sisters, our parents and some Africans.

We opened up with the "address", that greatly pleased His Grace. There were quite a few songs and an action song by Stand-

ard III called "O Soldier", which greatly pleased the audience judging by the roar of laughter and applause it brought down. The best part of it was the "Ballet Dance" which was danced to the music of "The Glow Worm". There was also a drill. At the end His Grace again made a wonderful speech, congratulating Mother Majella for her work and the young lady who read the address, in which he was greatly honored; and finally he said how pleased he was with everyone and everything.

When the concert was over it was time to say goodbye to His Grace and our parents. The never

to be forgotten day had come to an end.

Sister Mary John added: This account of the blessing of our new school gives only the sunny side of the picture. There still remains a heavy debt which must be paid. We have also had a whole term full of troubles, ranging from a real invasion of little ones that bite, to expected attacks of big ones who shoot . . . but our Blessed Mother has protected us so far from the Mau Mau. Though they have made a number of attempts to attack us, it was always found out in time.

On the Way to Heaven

"John, tomorrow morning we will leave at four o'clock. I want to reach the mission before the sun is high," the Bishop told his boy.

"Everything will be ready," was the answer.

The next morning after Mass, the Bishop took his breakfast and asked the boy to bring his boots. John brought them, but they were as dirty as the Bishop had left them the day before.

"Why didn't you clean my boots?"

"I thought it wasn't worthwhile, Your Excellency. After not even one hour they would be as dirty as they are now!"

The Bishop made no answer. He put on his boots and asked if the camels were ready. They were.

"Let's go."

"But I haven't had breakfast yet," John replied.

"Oh! it isn't worthwhile. After not even one hour, you'll be hungry again."

They left. On the way John kept at a greater distance from the Bishop than usual. After some time, they met a caravan, which passed the Bishop, who was saying his breviary.

Accosting long-faced John, who followed rather far behind, they asked, "Who is he?"

"Why he is the Bishop, and I am his boy, John."

"Where are you going?"

"We are going to Heaven. He's praying and I'm fasting!"

TWO BIRTHDA



WHITE SISTERS

Mary Glenn, R. D. 2
Franklin, Pa.

Dear Sisters:

Please send me literature about
becoming a White Sister.

Name

Street

City Zone

State Age

While the Catholic world celebrates Mary's Birthday, the White Sisters' Congregation also commemorates the blessed anniversary of its birth in Africa.

Truly born of this Heavenly Mother, the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa proudly gives all the credit for the wonderful work accomplished in the Dark Continent to Our Lady, who watches more tenderly over their missions than a mother does over a most loved child.

In 1869, Cardinal Lavigerie, then Archbishop of Algiers, North Africa, called eight young girls to his diocese . . . they were to be the first White Sisters. After saying Goodbye to their families, they set sail from Marseilles, crossed the Mediterranean Sea and landed in Algiers on Sept. 8th, the birthday of Our Blessed Mother. Never before had they crossed the sea. It had been a big sacrifice to leave their loved ones and their native land, but they had generously offered that to God and were determined never to take it back. Although their hearts had been a little sad when they said Goodbye, they were now filled with joy, for here they were actually in the land where God wanted them to work and bring *Souls to Him* . . . they were to dedicate their lives to the salvation of Africa.

What a task! In those days, nearly a hundred years ago, Africa was different from what it is today; it was *truly* named *the Dark*

DAYS IN ONE

Continent. Although in the early days there were many Christians in North Africa, for centuries now it had been the center of Moslemism. The people believed in God but did not know Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Few white people had penetrated into the depths of the jungles of Central Africa . . . but in spite of this, the dauntless group of young girls knew that with God's grace, they would help to bring Christ to Africa and Africa to Christ.

As they walked through the narrow cobbled streets of Algiers, they looked with bewilderment at the hundreds of Arabs hurrying by them and chatting in groups, here and there. One of the young heroines said to her companions: "But shall we ever convert all these people?"

Yes, it was a tremendous task, but *Someone* was going to be there to help, and that was *Our Blessed Mother*. These brave girls were to be the first members of a new Missionary Congregation. They were to work exclusively for AFRICA, dedicating their lives to God, through Mary, under whose protection the budding Institute

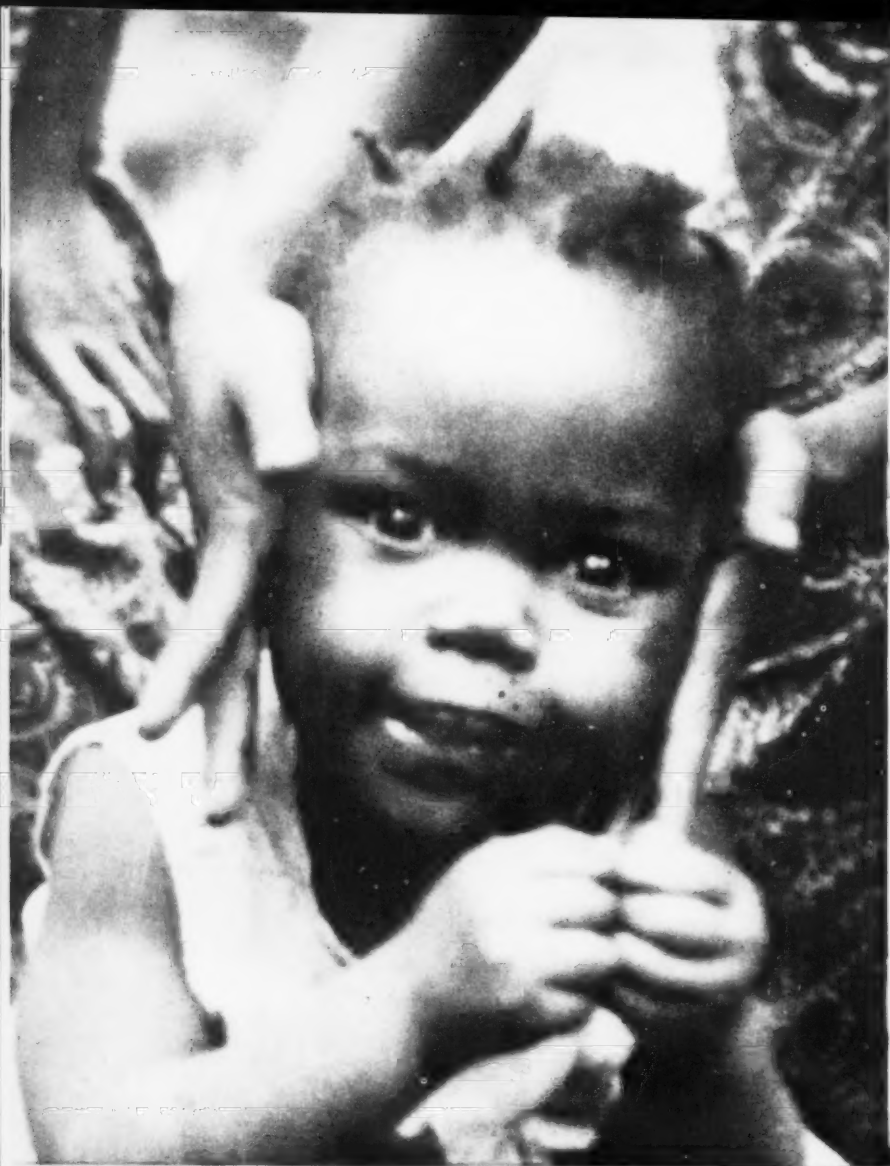
was placed. They became the first Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa, but because of their white habit, they were also called the White Sisters.

There are now over 1800 of these Missionary Sisters, most of them working in Africa, doing medical, educational or catechetical work, caring for leprosy patients or visiting the people in their homes; but the task is still great and each one in her heart says: "*But how shall we convert all these people?*"

In Africa, millions of souls are waiting to be delivered from their dark prisons of paganism and superstition. They crave for the *true* religion more than a starving man craves for food. Because there are not enough Missionaries to instruct them, they languish in a state of untold spiritual torment . . . *Who will be their saviors?*

You can be by saying an extra *Hail Mary* during the rest of the Marian Year for more Missionaries. Ask God to call many young boys and girls to follow Him, to be priests, Brothers and Sisters. Pray also that they will have the courage to answer the Call.





Hi there! Do you help the Propagation of the Faith?



The Propagation of the Faith! What's that?



You mean to say you don't know of the Holy Father's Missions?
You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

Didn't you
hear Bishop Sheen
say there are
one billion,
one hundred
million
pagans in the
world?



Yes, and that
many people wish
they could live a
"dog's life"



You're all doing a
lot of talking . . .
what about doing
something?

Mission Sunday
will be here on
October the 24th.
Where would we be
if people had not
helped us?

Let me think . . .
What can I do?





I could say a *Hail Mary* every
day for more Missionaries



It is my last corn, but
guess the Holy Father
will be pleased to get it
for his Missions . . .



That's right, Matilda. If everyone does his bit, it will be a great weight off the Holy Father's mind.

GOD LOVES THE DAGARTI

By SR. M. ELIZABETH OF THE TRINITY, W.S.

Almost two thousand years ago, before ascending to Heaven, Jesus Christ, having accomplished His work upon earth, said to the little group of friends He was leaving behind: "Go, teach all nations, baptizing them . . ."

In 1929, three White Fathers heard the echo of that command in the assignment given them by their Vicar Apostolic: "Go to the Dagarti under ordinary circumstances, they should be easy to convert . . ."

Who are the Dagartis?

The Dagarti tribe numbers about 200,000 souls, inhabiting an area of about 10,000 square miles, about the size of Maryland. The Black Volta River, which is the natural boundary between the French territory of High Volta and the English territory of the Gold Coast, splits the land of the Dagarti in half; however, they are at home on both sides of the river, and emigrations from one side to the other are common.

The Dagartis are a primitive people, so little known that they are hardly mentioned by the geographers, who, indeed, if they speak of them at all, consider them as part of the neighboring tribe of Lobi. Civilization has not reached them. Except for Administrators and the governmental services existing in a few large villages, there are no Europeans, for there is no money to be made here. The land is poor, and most uncleared; a traveller along its nar-

row, unkempt trails gets the impression of an almost uninhabited waste land.

The White Fathers who opened the first mission to the Dagarti built their home at Jirapa, in English territory. They built it like the native huts, of mud, with a flat roof of closely interwoven large branches supported by rough-hewn tree trunks. Then they began to visit their new field of activity. In the endless bush, broken only by occasional hills, they found large huts nestling among the tall grasses and trees, somber and enormous in their individual isolation. Each hut shelters a family group which may number as many as sixty or eighty persons! It must therefore be very large, and is usually very oddly shaped, for the custom is to have a large central room, to which are added innumerable little rooms of all shapes and sizes, as the needs and desires of a growing family may dictate.

There is no disorder in these huts, and no filth; they contain no furniture, and therefore are easy to keep clean. No table is needed: when mealtime comes, groups of five or six persons gather around a dish of food on the ground; each one takes from the common dish a morsel of food which is usually dipped into a plate of sauce before being conveyed to the mouth. After the meal each one licks his fingers—and the dishwashing is finished! No table, no chairs, no



The home of the Dagarti.

cupboard: the large round jars which contain the day's supply of water stand in a row along the wall. There are no beds; instead, mats of braided straw are unrolled at night, inside or outside the hut; when the mat is no longer usable, one can always sleep right on the ground. The hard ground is the Dagarti's cradle, and the ground will be his deathbed also, after a difficult and rather joyless life.

It would be nothing to sit on the ground and eat from an earthen dish, if the food were appetizing and varied. But the Dagarti woman serves only one food—a sort of porridge of millet, called “sad”—every day, or rather every evening, for the Dagartis eat only one meal a day: no breakfast, nor lunch, nor snack for them. From daybreak, when the men shoulder their spades and file along the narrow jungle paths to the millet fields, until dusk when, after working their poor dry soil under the blazing sun, they return to their huts, they taste no food.

The Dagartis are all farmers; that is, all the men till the soil in order to eat. They have no commerce; one must eat to live, and in order to eat, one must grow the food. Farming is backbreaking work under such inferior conditions: the men lack the strength that nourishing food would give; the “daba”, their primitive spade whose handle is a forked stick, is difficult to manage, and there are no farm animals or other tools. But for centuries the Dagartis have gone on in this way, and no one of them has ever found a way to make things easier.

Still . . . why should there be only one meal a day? When a man is asked this question, the answer is always the same, given with a little bitterness: “Well, you know, with our women . . .” Poor Dagarti women! One might easily blame them, if one did not see how they live. They are slow, it is true, and listless—yet they do work which no American woman would do. Before the sun rises, the Dagarti wife must find her

day's supply of firewood; so, with the baby astride her hip and her sharp knife on her shoulder, she may go several miles before finding enough wood, and then she must make the return journey, balancing the load on her head.

Next, she must fill the water-jars. Carrying a jar on her head, she sets out again, heading for one of the little ponds where water still remains from the last rainy season. The "marigots" provide water not only for humans, but for all the animals and birds. Because ferocious animals frequent them at night, the natives build their huts at a respectful distance from them, sometimes a mile or more away.

Once the wood and the water have been procured, the millet must be ground by hand, for the Dagartis have no mills. For hours one may hear the rhythmic pounding of the pestle in the mortar, reducing the grains to tiny fragments which must be further pounded into flour between two stones. All this requires hours of work . . . What woman could possibly prepare enough flour for more than one meal a day, especially since she must also take care of the children, feed the baby, and at harvest time help her husband in the fields! The usual practice is to prepare enough porridge for several days, keeping the extra supply in water, which does not precisely make it more tasty . . .

The Dagartis and the Moral Law

The Dagartis are used to suffering from hunger; always underfed, they are capable of remaining

two or even three days without food except for a little corn or some groundnuts. It is not surprising that they have no resistance to disease. Entire villages have been wiped out by epidemics of sleeping sickness. Very few families are untouched by the dread scourge of leprosy. During the rainy season, pneumonia is common, for the Dagartis wear few clothes.

The morals of many of the African tribes are depraved, but the Dagartis, even as pagans, possess a lofty code of morals which is severely enforced by their social laws. Of course, as in all of pagan Africa, polygamy is practiced, but it is a sort of "small" polygamy, for wives are very expensive and only the rich man can afford three or four. When the head of a household has many daughters, he is rich, for each one will be sold for three or four cows, thirty goats, seventy hens and a sum of money equivalent to about ten dollars. The payment of this dowry to the father constitutes the "civil" marriage. Once this dowry is paid, the girl belongs to the family of her husband, and adultery is severely punished, not because it is a sin but because it is an injustice to the husband. Immoral conduct in young girls is almost non-existent. Although the moral behavior of the women is probably dictated by fear of punishment more than love of virtue (before the Whites came, death was the punishment for adultery) still it must be recognized that these pagans made severe laws because they esteem purity in their women.

These people are a mixture of the most lovable natural qualities with some glaring deficiencies, tainted like all of us by original sin, though perhaps not so markedly as many others. Indolence, it would seem, is the main defect here. It is the impression one gets when visiting them: they are quiet, gentle people, without passions or great energy. We do not find among them that distinctive personality, that pride, those human responses which make even the most barbarous peoples attractive. The Dagartis are dull and listless, without stories and without wars. Their conversation is uninteresting, and the women especially give the impression of knowing nothing and caring less: they are machines to do the work, with absolutely unawakened intelligences. The surrounding tribes, more shrewd and less backward, regard the Dagartis with contempt. However, the intelligence of the Dagartis is in the same state as their land; for centuries it has been regarded as absolutely unproductive, and yet one discovers that it will produce great fruit if properly cultivated.

A visitor might also say of them: they are heartless. The sentimental side of their character is completely dormant: totally unknown are kindness, affection, devotion, self-forgetfulness. There is no cruelty, but emotion remains on the animal level. For example, the love of a mother for her child is real: she will never separate herself from the child, and will nurse him whenever he is hungry; but she never thinks of caressing him, or smiling at him, or

of spending time to teach him to walk—in a word, the little things that give other mothers so much joy as a child's soul awakens and his mind develops: these joys are unknown to her.

Conjugal love does not appear either; the word itself is unknown to the Dagartis. Marriage is a business matter, a necessary part of life which does not require emotion. To marry one girl rather than another is a minor detail when marriage is to be thought of: "One woman is the same as another," they say. And if we look at those pagan households where several wives work for the same husband, without jealousy or desire or heartpangs, without any emotion at all, we might be

Women going for a supply of water.



led to think: "After all, they may be unhappy, but they don't seem to know it!"

Yes, they are unhappy, for in their life without any material comfort, lacking even the necessities sometimes, they know nothing of intellectual or spiritual joys: to learn, to know, to make things, to tell their thoughts—or even simply to think of something beyond the daily struggle for existence. They are unhappy because they know nothing of the spirit and its joys: the greatest happiness on earth.

Often we have heard people say: "But those people don't suffer from their plight. Why show them what they lack, and make them realize their unhappiness? They don't see their disgrace; let us leave them in peace." We could even justify that attitude by the sad situation of so many natives who have adopted the Western mode of life, and are unhappier than ever . . .

But that is the wrong way to look at things. To see the problem in its proper light, we must not look first to Man, we must first look at the Creator of man. Is this life of the Dagarti the one planned for man by his Creator? Is it for this materialistic, brutal, precarious existence that God placed them on this earth? No, that cannot be; they too have the right to develop their human faculties, and, especially, they have the right to become, as we are, the children of God.

*He has not thus favored
other nations*

The three White Fathers who had been sent to preach the Gos-

pel had been with the Dagarti for three years. They had learned the language, they visited the people, nursed the sick, spoke to the men whenever they met them in the jungle paths—and the docile, amiable Dagartis did not become converted in the least!

For the missionaries had met a formidable obstacle, against which enthusiasm and vitality were impotent: habit, routine, the paralyzing past. The wise old ones had said: "We will not go to the Whites. They have their heaven, and we have ours. In ours we will dance to the beat of the tom-tom and drink beer; if we went to theirs we would get bored . . ." And so, the Good News was not heard. Yet, the Bishop had said: "Under ordinary circumstances, they should be easy to convert," his words sounding like a response to the Dagarti saying: "You know, God loves the Dagartis!"

It seems strange to hear this phrase so frequently from the lips of a tribe which seems to have been sadly ill-equipped by the Lord, but it contains a great deal of truth. Yes, God loves the Dagartis, and as proof of His love, He has given them natural qualities of tremendous importance; their great poverty, their complete lack of material goods has removed from their hearts one of the greatest faults of the human race: the love of riches, of a comfortable life, the burning desire to possess, to have more than others, to have the most. This is unknown to the Dagarti people, one of whom told a Sister one day: "Mother, those who have money

lowed a chain of reasoning, but they would accept the evidence of their eyes. For them we can pray with the words of the Psalmist: "Have mercy on us, O God of all . . . Lift up Thy hand over the strange nations, that they may see Thy power . . . Renew Thy signs, and work new miracles . . . Hasten the time, and remember the end, that they may declare Thy wonderful works." (Eccl. 36)

God gave his proofs to the Dagaris: proofs that they could understand, so convincing that they have accepted them.

In the next Number you will find how God manifested His power and how the Dagartis accepted the proofs and embraced our Holy Religion.

God takes the Dagartis as they are, as He takes all the men He made. They would not have fol-



A Prayer for

Our Blessed Mother

Twenty dusky faces were bent over their books, but not all of them were thinking of lessons. How could they when the new statue of Our Lady had arrived and tomorrow she was to be crowned? There was to be a procession and afterwards a feast; it was to be the grandest of days.

Paulo scratched his woolly head. Sister had said that they should have something special to offer Our Lady and he could not think of anything to give.

He had visited her that morning and she had looked so lovely with her arms stretched out welcoming him as he knelt to say a prayer. What he could not understand was why she did not have the Baby Jesus with her, and he wondered if she was lonely without Him.

"Ooh," he nearly jumped out of his seat, he had an idea of what he could give, or perhaps it would have to be loaned but it would be something special. He nudged Petro, his best friend, but at that moment Sister looked up so he would have to wait to tell Petro of his great plan.

At last the bell went, and Sister Joseph smiled as she saw two small boys wending their way down the path to the shrine.

"Petro, I have thought what I can offer Our Lady; she looks lonely without her Baby. If you help me, we could take Okola, my new brother, and leave him with her, so that she will not mind so much at not having the Baby Jesus there." Petro screwed up his little button nose and grinned. Of course he would help.

Some hours later the two were creeping into the hut belonging to Paulo's parents. There was nobody about and it was easy to pick up Okola, who gave a squeal and then went to sleep again.

Back they crept to the mission. "Petro, do you think Our Lady will baptize him so that he can go to heaven? I heard Sister telling Mama it ought to be done, and Mama cried and said my father would not agree."

"Let's ask her," said Petro. So after carefully putting Okola at the feet of Our Lady they knelt down and asked her to make him a child of God.

Much later there was a noise outside the mission. Sister Anne went out to find some of the women from the village. "Sister," they cried, "what shall we do? Okola has disappeared."

Sister Anne told them to wait while she called the others. They then planned to inquire at all the huts, and this they did until they came to that of Magdalana, the mother of Paulo, who was there with her husband, Ngoka. "Sisters," he said, "Magdalana tells me that if I ask the one you call Our Lady, she will help us to find our son. I have done this, and if my son is found safe, he shall be baptized."

"Come," said Sister Anne, "let us go and pray for Okola's safety."

The party moved on to the shrine in the mission garden. Of course, there at the feet of Our Lady was Okola, still sleeping, and in spite of all the insects humming in the garden not one had bitten him.

What happiness there was! "Someone must have put our child there," said Ngoka, "but the Lady Mary has taken care of him, and I will keep my word. He shall be baptized and I would like to learn more of your religion."

The next day it was found out how Okola was brought to Our Lady, but when two small boys explained to Sister Joseph, how could she be cross? They had indeed brought the Mother of God another little son with the baptism of Okola.



NEWS

Another African Congregation reaches maturity for self-government. After 21 years of existence, the Congregation of African Sisters known as the *Tereziya* (Teresians) of the Vicariate Apostolic of Kitega, Urundi, has become autonomous, with an African Sister, Mother Mary Teresa, as Superior General and with four other African Sisters as members of the General Council. The community will henceforth be under the responsibility and care of its own Superiors. The new Superior General and her Council have, however, asked for the temporary assistance of two White Sisters.

This is the third African Congregation, founded by the White Sisters, to reach this ideal stage of autonomy.

• • •

Catholics in Uganda have well passed the million mark, according to statistics of June 30th, 1953. In the total population of 5,000,000 there were, on the date just mentioned, 1,230,000 Catholics and 102,000 Catechumens in the country.

There are 508 priests in Uganda and of that number 151 are Africans. Religious vocations are numerous: African Brothers and Sisters now outnumber foreign Brothers and Sisters: Brothers 137 to 104 and Sisters 746 to 257.

Uganda is an ecclesiastical province with the Archdiocese of Rubaga as Metropolitan See, confided to the White Fa-

thers, and five suffragan sees: Gulu, confided to the African Missionaries of Verona; Kampala, confided to the Mill Hill Fathers; Masaka, confided to the African clergy with Bishop Kiwanuka, W.F., as Ordinary; Mbarara, confided to the White Fathers; and Tororo, confided to the Mill Hill Fathers.

• • •

First Saturday Devotions. In the Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya, often in areas where *Mau Mau* is or was rife, a practice of holding all night prayer vigils is an interesting and encouraging feature of Catholic life. These vigils are held the night before the first Saturday of each month. Their object is to pay honor to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and to obtain, through her intercession, the protection and blessing of Almighty God for the Mission and for the Kikuyu people. They are attended by young and old. The night is spent in prayer, which always includes the recitation of the Rosary, and in listening to sermons and spiritual reading. The Blessed Sacrament is exposed throughout the night and the vigil ends with Mass in the morning. Confessions are heard throughout the night and there are many communicants at the morning Mass.

Many must travel as much as twenty miles in order to be present. Nearly all who come remain for the entire night. Attendance is frequently so good that the churches cannot accommodate all. The congregations include many Pagans and non-Catholics.

The Catholics of the Nairobi area have been prominent for their loyalty to the Faith and for their opposition to the anti-Christian *Mau Mau*.



Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa

